Demand for Privatisation of Coal Mines

469. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have decided to consider the demand for privatisation of coal mines and declaration of coal sector as an infrastructure sector so that industry could avail tax-concessions;

(b) if so, by when legislation in this regard is likely to be brought forward before Parliament; and

(c) what was the coal production this year as compared to last year in coal mines of Coal India Ltd., Singareni Collieries and Neyveli Lignite Companies and the amount of investment made by Government so far during the said period, area-wise?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRIMATI KANTI SINGH): (a) No, Sir. There is no proposal for privatisation of the coal sector. However, in order to enable greater investments in the coal sector, the Government are considering appropriate amendments in the Coal Mines (Nationalisation) Act, 1973 to enable any Indian company to mine coal. While not treating coal as infrastructure sector, the Government has a proposal to extend the benefits of tax concessions for coal sector as is applicable for the infrastructure sector.

(b) The Government have not yet decided when the Bill to amend the Coal Mines (Nationalisation) Act, 1973 will be introduced in Parliament. Discussions with the Unions have been initiated in order to address their concern before this Bill is introduced.

(c) Coal India Limited (CIL) and Singareni Collieries Company Limited (SCCL) are mining coal whereas Neyveli Lignite Corporation (NLC) mine lignite. Coal Production and investment made this year (upto October) compared to the last year in respect of CIL and SCCL is as under:—

Company	Production (in M.T.)		Investment (Rs. crores)	
	1996-97	1997-98 (upto Oct.)	1996-97	1997-98 (upto Oct.)
CIL	250.62	134.35	1530.45	1042.57
SCCL	28.73	13.99	250.00	89.77

Additional Coal Production in Ninth Plan

470. DR. MANMOHAN SINGH: Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

(a) what is the target for additional coal production in the Ninth Plan;

(b) have the relevant projects been identified, if so, the details thereof;

(c) what is the estimate of additional investment in this sector; and

(d) how are the needed resources sought to be mobilised?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRIMATI KANTI SINGH): (a) Ninth Five Year Plan is yet to be finalised. However as against the actual coal production of 285.67 million tonnes in the terminal year of 8th Five year Plan (1996-97), Working Group on coal and lignite for formulation of 9th Five year Plan has projected production of coal at 359.60 million tonnes in the terminal year of 9th Five year Plan (2001-02). Thus additional coal production would be 73.93 million tonnes.